

CHRISTIAN DRAMA

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SIXPENCE

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When the Council met on 28th September it had to face the question of what part denominational worship ought to play in an R.D.S. School. Mr. Davey, the Editorial Secretary of S.P.C.K., was asked to discuss this question, and he did so, raising in addition various other questions concerning the place of worship and theology in a School of Religious Drama. What he said seems to us to be so relevant to the co-operative work for religious Drama that we reproduce it here.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

By F. N. DAVEY

A School of Religious Drama is a School of Drama, not a religious conference. In fact it is attended by members of the Free Churches, by Anglicans, and even by Roman Catholics; and the first answer to the question what services ought to be provided appears to be simply this: that where there are several members of any one denomination, they ought to be provided daily with precisely those services or meetings which they would ideally have provided for them were they living together in ordinary life. I am not competent to say what ought to be provided for Free Churchmen. Were I responsible for a conference to which a number of Free Churchmen were coming, I should try to see that their spiritual needs were catered for, in this way, by a minister acting as their chaplain: just as I should try to secure that Roman Catholics were being properly looked after.

With a chaplain to look after them Anglicans living together have a right to expect Mattins, Holy Communion, and Evensong daily. Therefore I think that such a school ought to be provided with these services, though it must be evident that the offices, Mattins, and Evensong—which are not *obligatory* for a layman on weekdays—might have to be said at times inconvenient for some Anglican members of the school, and be attended in practice by very few besides the clergy. I should much deprecate the provision of Compline, which is a luxury for those who have time for an additional service, not a substitute for the Divine Service of the Prayer Book.

Having provided the essential religious services for Anglicans, and seen that members of other denominations were duly cared for, I should try to see whether these three common religious activities might be introduced into the time-table and offered to all taking part in the school. And to that end, I should plan them in conjunction with the ministers of other denominations.

1. All Christians ought to meditate, and many Christians are helped to do so, from time to time, by conducted meditations. I should try to fit into the time-table, probably after breakfast and before the first session, a daily short devotional address leading to meditation, or simply a conducted meditation. The minister or priest doing this would be carefully chosen, would probably *not* be one of the chaplains of the School, and would be free to plan how the time should be spent.

2. All Christians who are allowed to do so ought to praise God, and pray to Him, together. I would, therefore, suggest that the last corporate act of each day should be an act of worship and prayer, probably consisting of a reading of scripture, of prayers set or improvised, and of the singing of a hymn. I would plan these "epilogues" with the Free Church chaplain, and I would take care to see that each of us took part on each occasion, and that we did not always take the same part. This would be an inter-denominational service, binding the whole school together.

3. There is a further activity which I believe ought to be included in a School of Religious Drama. Whether we like it or not, religious drama is not a subjective recreation, but a means of promoting, or obscuring, the truth of God. Therefore, unless it is to be hopelessly out of date, irrelevant, and dilettantesque, it must be consciously related to the science of theology. For theology is a science—not an art—and a science that moves even more quickly than the other sciences. Many theological books are dead five years after they are written. A great theologian may have something really significant to say for two or three years only of his life.

Theology cannot be disregarded by religious drama, not merely because much religious drama is inspired by the scriptures, but also because the problem of the relation between time and eternity—which is the fundamental problem of theology—is a fundamental problem of drama. Christian theology insists on the ultimate importance—through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ—of history. Upon this basis it would be possible to define Christian drama—as opposed to non-Christian drama—as the drama which takes history, that is, what happens in time and space and is observable by men, seriously. If so, those who are presenting Christian drama to the world can hardly afford to ignore those whose business it is to try to show men and women in the contemporary world, in terms of their contemporary thought, how God offers them eternal life in and through the historical situation in which they are placed.

Of course it is the dramatists who must first of all take note of the theologians. There is nothing so theologically offensive as the play which uses the Nativity or the Passion as a medium for romantic

sentimentalizing or for political or social idealism. The only justification for plays on these subjects is that they should expound the *meaning of what happened*, in so far as, by the best aids of theology, that meaning may be determined. Again, there is such a thing as Christian art and such a thing as non-Christian art. There have been periods of almost unalloyed Christian art, and periods when Christian art has hardly managed to baptize a prevailing naturalism or romanticism. It is one thing to say that Christian art must be up to date and make use of contemporary artistic form; it is quite another thing to say that Christians must use a form of art whose theory is based—let us say—upon a doctrine of creation that is explicitly non-Christian. It is, therefore, essential that the dramatist should be aware of the theological criticism of the medium to which he finds himself drawn. And it is essential also that those who choose plays, who produce them, or who act in them, should be aware of the theological implications of the art with which they are concerned. It is by no means irrelevant whether the subject of a play is to be presented as history or as a myth.

If so, ought there to be a place for a theologian in a school of Religious Drama? My belief is that there ought, and that he ought to have one or two periods allotted to him in which he would describe the issues with which theology is at the moment most concerned, and examine, no doubt in discussion, what bearing these issues have upon the work of Christian drama. And quite apart from this, it would be very good for a school of drama to hear a biblical theologian giving his impressions of the Jesus presented to us in the Gospels. That vital and tremendous Figure is too often treated and presented, in the plays we produce, with little inkling of the true quality of His presence and work. Some of those who study the New Testament would say that many of the most dramatic evidences of His purpose are consequently overlooked.

OPEN LETTER

TO THE EDITOR:

SIR,

In an article entitled "The Case for University Drama," published in the *Universities' Quarterly* for February, 1947—an article which has lost none of its point in two and a half years—Mr. Nevill Coghill urges with extreme cogency the case for the serious consideration of Drama as a fit subject for University study. And not only for study, but for practice. He writes :—

"Although English playwrights are studied in our schools and universities, they are, for the most part, studied as *writers*, as men whose weapon was the pen, rather than the stage and the actor; official productions of their plays as part of the curriculum were, until recently, rare at schools, and such productions are still more rare at universities. This is unfortunate. The production of a great play by a school or university is a celebration, a *solemnitas*, a thing to take pride in; it is a 'two-hour's traffic' which gathers to itself so much of the spiritual

and intellectual life of the place that it may be fairly said to be an 'abstract or brief chronicle' of its best activities, a flower rooted in a year of study. The *quality* of a school or university as a whole can express itself no less, perhaps more, in this way than by sending a boat to Henley. . . .

"Certainly it is good to read plays in the study, to ponder them as *books*. Meaning and beauty and a knowledge of the ways of thought and feeling flow into a reader's mind; but the actual experience of producing, acting and seeing a play on a stage is a thing both closer to the author's intention (and all criticism must begin from divining this), and also a way of giving an understanding that escapes even the most gifted reader in his study."

Mr. Coghill continues:—

"There are, indeed many plays—and great ones—which yield a fallacious meaning in the study; their true import can only become clear in action. More than once or twice, in preparing a production, I have buried myself in the great armchairs of Lamb, Bradley and others and puzzled out a studious meaning for my play, only to find in rehearsal that other more vivid and more important meanings spring out of it when released in action on a stage. The late George Gordon, formerly Professor of English at Oxford, once said to me: 'When I wish to *learn* about something, I advertise a course of *lectures* on it'; and this paradox is no less applicable to plays. When I am uncertain of the meaning of a play, I try to produce it; and production has, in many cases, taught me an understanding which no other kind of work or research upon it could have yielded. I beg this to be believed by those who have not attempted it; production illuminates a play as nothing else can. . . ."

I write, Sir, as a student of the Drama, not as a University Don, and write, therefore, with a becoming hesitation. I have quoted at length because I believe what Mr. Coghill says to have the greatest possible relevance for the development of Religious Drama. He concludes his article by an appeal for a "Laboratory Theatre", of which models already exist, so constructed as to provide, by easy mechanisms, for a change in shape, allowing the production, in correct staging, of Greek, Elizabethan, Restoration or modern plays.

This article appeared two and a half years ago. In May, 1951, we are instructed to "put Britain on show to the world", and the powers that be are exhorting us to make sure that each locality of Britain emerges from this (to our insular emotions) fiery ordeal, better off, at least in some particular, than we were before it took place.

Now from a careful perusal of two and a half years of articles in *Christian Drama*, it appears to a student of the matter that what Religious Drama in general needs is precisely that Laboratory Theatre, though not necessarily with the mechanical contrivances to change its historical period. At a time when the Daily Press itself is bringing to our notice the fact that all the Long Voyages are crewed by the old

salts, and that the midshipmites and cooksboys simply cannot get so much as a ship's biscuit—i.e. at a time of considerable underemployment on the professional stage, especially among young actors and actresses, are we not losing a quite staggering opportunity if we do not somehow achieve at least as much as André Obey, inspired by Jacques Copeau, achieved just before the war, namely the formation of a company of young players who will rehearse together in the country till they are a company, and not a gang, and will then either acquire a theatre or tour the country with such power informing their work as will compel attention?

What, after all, was Obey's achievement beyond this extraordinarily finely co-ordinated team work? Who, among those who saw it, will forget the hot night of Seville, and the mass of people who thronged the square and the streets, before the birth of Don Juan? I think in fact that seething crowd was composed of eight disciplined actors, but it may have been fewer. And who will forget "Tarquin's ravishing strides" through the labyrinthine passages leading to the bower of Lucrece? Yet there was no more to them than Miss Doreen Woodcock could teach a learner willing to apprentice himself to a gifted mime. And Obey took the town; and took it in a foreign tongue; we all know the story of the grandmother who asked for her money back when she learned, on translating, that *Le Viol de Lucrece* might not prove wholly helpful to the musical studies of her little grand-daughter.

Yes, but there was after all something more than the team spirit and discipline of the actors. There was the inspiration Obey drew, as an author, from having a team to write for—an inspiration which also nourished Shakespeare. And it is not impossible that we should imitate Obey. There are a number of alternative schemes we could pursue. To mention only one:—not sixty miles from London—no further away, that is, than Brighton—is a theatre, now full of beer casks. It is a lovely theatre, in a lovely small market town. What, if we were really determined, should stay us from its acquisition? Not poverty, nor municipalities, nor all the drowsy Silkins of this or any other government could stand in our way; and if we couldn't get *that* theatre or it was found unsuitable there are others elsewhere. We need a theatre, we need a company, and we need both in 1951. But all these needs are secondary to our central need of a capital sum of money, say £10,000.

We heard at York an enquiry for news of "millionaire uncles, extant and untapped"—but what we need at the moment, it seems to me, is one hundred modest and determined persons, who will raise £100 each for such a purpose: or one thousand who will raise £10 each. Mr. Editor, Sir, what is the membership of R.D.S. that we still lack a theatre and a company? I do not know if it is constitutional to do so, but I beg leave to enclose herewith my cheque for the first ten pounds, while asking your indulgence in withholding any other signature to this letter than that of

STUDENT.

This article, by a man of real inventive power, may have far-reaching effects on the lighting of Church Plays.

THE LIGHTING PROBLEM

By P. BULLOCK-FLINT

"To light this play adequately I shall need a couple of dozen 500 watt spots all on separate dimmers."

No, I am not joking. I have said that to a producer, and the play was one which regularly occurs in R.D.S. "News of the Others". Ultimately it all boils down to the question of whether we wish to light our play, or merely to illuminate the actors. The first object of all lighting is illumination, that much is assumed; but if you agree with me that nothing but the best is good enough for God then we must go beyond illumination, and by the judicious use of colours and dimmers assist the producer to create his atmosphere and bring home to the audience the message of the play. In other words we must "light" our plays, and "to light this play adequately. . . ." But I have said all that before.

You may well ask why we need so many lamps when the local amateurs did a very good job of work at the Town Hall with only four lamps and the usual battens. The answer lies in the shape of the two buildings. Both have a space filled with seats, and an open space for the action but in the hall there is a proscenium arch, and that from an electrician's point of view makes all the difference. Behind the pelmet he places the No. 1 Spot-bar which is accessible at least while the curtain is down. Furthermore, he has no need to bother about the light which spills out into the wings, for that is also hidden from the audience by the convenient proscenium arch. In a church we have no such advantages. Our lamps must be placed on pillars or in window embrasures well out of the way of the audience and actors, and equally out of the way of the stage-hand who wants to change a filter between scenes. The very shape of the building forces us to place our lamps in positions which are inaccessible once the play has started. Consequently we shall need an extra lamp, or set of lamps, for every colour change in the play. Nor do our troubles end with the colour problem. We have no friendly proscenium to mask the light which spills out into the wings and throws into prominence the slate and marble monstrosity erected to the beloved memory of Sarah Ann. We must concentrate our light on the acting area if we are to prevent the audience from being distracted by irrelevant architectural details, therefore magazine battens are out. Add to this the question of cost (two dozen lamps and dimmers would cost £40 a week to hire) and we have the problem which faces us in lighting, rather than illuminating plays in churches.

To summarize our requirements: we need a lamp in which the colours can be changed from a remote position, and one which can be prevented from spreading its light beyond the acting area. As far as I know there is no such lamp made for the professional theatre, except

those wonderful gadgets fitted with a colour wheel driven by an electric motor or trackerwires, and costing about £30 per lamp, so we must design a lamp to meet our own needs. The rest of this article will be devoted to a description of just such a lamp.

Every schoolboy knows that pure white light is the product of seven colours, and every possible shade can be obtained by mixing these seven colours in the correct proportions. Seven is an uncomfortably large number to handle, but fortunately there are three primary colours which will give us near-white light, and the solution to our problem lies along these lines. Unfortunately "three-colour mixing" has its own problems. We cannot simply rig three focus lanterns, each giving a primary colour, and leave it at that, for we shall get three differently coloured shadows cast by every object on the stage. The effect may be very pretty, but it will also be very distracting to find that Herod's nose casts three differently coloured shadows. Indeed it is worse than distracting, for it soon becomes difficult to distinguish between the shadow and the substance of the nose. Somehow we must either eliminate the shadows, or multiply them to such an extent that they cancel each other out.

All existing equipment which uses three colour mixing starts by sending out separately coloured rays, and mixing them on the stage. The system we propose mixes the light on a mirror before it leaves the lamp.

Let us try to visualize such an arrangement. Imagine you are looking into the front of a square container fitted with lamp-holders at the corners, each screened all ways except on that side facing inwards where four filter frames are inserted. That leaves us with an inner cubic space, open at the front, but having at the back a specially designed, corrugated, mirror. In opposite corners we place two bulbs behind red and green filters respectively; so that the light from each is reflected from the surfaces of the corrugated mirror in the same direction—that is, through our open front. Thus we send out on to the stage a number of bands of red light, alternating with a number of bands of green light. We can add our third colour (blue) by putting bulbs behind appropriate filters in the two remaining corners and by adding further corrugations to our mirror at right angles to those reflecting the red and green light.

The effect of all this is to multiply the separate light sources in a small space (e.g. six bands per bulb on a six-inch mirror) in such a way that the shadows are no longer distinguishable by the human eye, so for all practical purposes of stage lighting they have been eliminated. Thus we get the lamp we require which can be hooded to focus it onto the acting area, and in which the colours can be controlled from the dimmer board by mixing the three primary colours in the correct proportions for any shade the producer wants.

This is not the place to go into the details of the control mechanism for such a lamp. Ordinary slide dimmers can be used, but there is an instrument now on the drawing board which will give the colour required merely by turning a dial.

"All this is ingenious, but will it be any use to our parish?" In order to answer that question we must ask how we normally use our lamps. If we wish to spot a particular character we shall still need a proper "spot" lamp. But how often in the normal course of a play do we want to do that? Generally we use our "spot" lamps as narrow angle floods to paint the whole acting area, and no more than the acting area, with a warm white or a pale pink light, or a golden glow, or a blue-green haze, or some other tint to suit the mood as well as the scene of the play. All these and twenty-eight nameable colours, together with an infinite variety of shades, are available at a touch of the dimmer handles with this new type of lamp. Moreover, if the producer asks for a little more blue in scene 3, simply slide up the blue dimmer handles, and if he does not like it you can always slide them down again and try something else.

The normal fit-up for a parish church using this system would consist of four or six of these lamps, and one or two spot lamps. Such a fit-up would be capable of lighting, not merely illuminating, almost any play we are likely to produce in a parish church. And the cost? About £3 per lamp (excluding dimmers) or in other words the cost of hiring one 500 watt spot-lamp for five weeks.

Two words of warning. If you think of making some of these lamps please communicate with me through R.D.S. and I will let you have full details. And do not expect to get the same results with an ordinary dimple reflector. The mirror is the crucial part of the whole system.

We present here with pleasure an extract from the delightful lecture on the York Mysteries given at the R.D.S. Summer School by the Asst. Librarian to the Dean and Chapter, York Minster, Miss Elizabeth Brunskill. Space forbids more than a short excerpt from the colourful and scholarly account Miss Brunskill gave us.

KING'S WEATHER

It is a far cry to 1397, but let the wings of time beat swiftly back for us to see the pageant in action. In essentials York has not altered, merely grown. There was then only one bridge over the river, and more great churches rose high above the narrow streets, and coloured clustered gables.

It is Thursday, and June, and king's weather. The whole town is buzzing like a mighty bee-hive, and most of the citizens have been up all night. Wednesday was the day of Corpus Christi procession, and the pageants must be out and ready on Toft Green between 4.50 and 5 in the morning. There is no time for mere sleeping, and almost everyone has, or has had, some finger in the proceedings. The 350 or more actors have been chosen for some time, there have been rehearsals, at least five, and the prompter's book* is thumbled and bent with use. The clothes are begged and borrowed and mended. Supplies of all sorts are laid in, for the plays are to be played twelve

* Still in existence.

times over in the street: rope and nails and soap and grease, and coals and worlds to burn, and great stores of food. The town is full of distinguished visitors, the banns proclaiming the pageant have gone round, so there must be no shortage of necessities. There is the mayor's feast, to say nothing of lesser junketings. York must have been baking and boiling, and frying and stewing and brewing, for days past. Banners are set out at the places where the plays are to be performed.

Out from Toft Green to Trinity Gateway, at two places in Micklegate, over the bridge, round the corner into Coney Street, then down Sonegate, along Petergate, to finish on the Pavement, go the pageant wagons.

Proud housewives are hanging out counterpanes and carpets from their windows, counterpanes as vivid as their dresses, red and blue, yellow and purple, fearfully and marvellously embroidered with peacock or popinjay. The streets, like the pageant floors, are strewn with rushes, all swept and garnished.

For this Trinity Thursday of 1397 was a capital letter occasion. The king was in York, keeping Corpus Christi; Richard II, so soon to lose his kingdom and his life. He loved the arts and York did its best to provide a worthy spectacle.

A royal box was put up opposite the gateway of Holy Trinity, of saplings boxed in cement, with fir planks for the flooring. The wood for the king's "barrs" as the account calls it, cost about twenty-one pounds in modern money. New pieces of painted cloth were bought, and a new banner. Banners were set up to indicate the playing places, and it is tempting to think that this new one was put at Trinity Gate, to grace the eyes of the king. With all its trappings it cost about eighteen pounds, so it must have been a banner extraordinary. Additional porters were engaged to push the wagons, as were some professional players. There were tips for the king's minstrels, and for those of the lords who attended. Twenty-seven pounds went in bread, beer, wine, meat, and fuel, for the Lord Mayor and the Council. The heaviest item of expenditure, however, is one which brings all the pomp and colour of the middle ages aglow with life. It is the spending of eighty-eight pounds on white and red cloth to provide new livery for the servants of the city council.

So Richard sat to watch the plays, with the smell of new-cut pine, rushes and roses about him, the banner at Trinity Gate lifting and falling in the little wind. Above, the steeple of Trinity Priory, and away down Micklegate a patchwork coloured crowd breaking and changing against the richly-carved doorways as the pageants moved on, till the day's festival ends with the last performance of the Merchant Adventurers' play of Judgment Day.

By this time, torches, flaring up into the blue, are set at the foot of the wagon, the angels gleaming as their garments catch the light, the devils grim in the shadow. One by one the stars prick their peepholes, and the parish clerk of All Saints' lights the lantern in the lovely tower where it shines like a homely earth-bound star. The banners droop, the windows, shorn of their finery, are shut eyes and hold their secrets. Back goes the last wagon into its shelter on the Green, the last reveller

shouts his way home, or rolls into the gutter. Then out come the rats, and gathering courage hold their pageant, scampering over the boards where Herod ranted, or Mary hushed her Child to sleep.

E. BRUNSKILL.

It has been suggested that the Religious Drama Society should regard the Feast of Corpus Christi as its special Festival. We should welcome the views of readers on suitable schemes for marking the day.

YORK DRAMA SCHOOL

IMPRESSIONS OF A NEW-COMER TO R.D.S. SUMMER SCHOOLS

By I. S. SQUIRES*

September 6th! Scattered now over Great Britain and Ireland are slightly bemused men and women, many of us plunged straight back into the demanding life of a classroom or the absorbing needs of a parish or the insistent claims of home, shop or office. Straight back from an exhilarating nine days at the R.D.S. Summer School at York, we are temporarily bemused with excess of light and stimulus. Memory needs a space of time in which to sort, assess, and secure this new gift of religious and dramatic treasure. My memory delightfully begins to retrace the highways and byways of the York school.

The first chuckle of surprise rises at the thought of the number of incongruous rôles happily assumed by most unlikely people. In just over a week R.D.S. tutors have made of me a flame, a grubby pig, a rabbi, a ragamuffin, the nineteenth part of a playwright (i.e. nineteen of us constructed a child's play together), the mother of a casualty in a mining accident, the first-born of Pharaoh's servant, a "dark" woman pouring out choric words with abandon, a model for lighting effects, a bit of the Lord's crowd during the feeding of the 5,000 and most astounding of all, they made an alto of me who am a confirmed soprano. For any stiff, unreleased producer or actor; for any Christian in a rut, I recommend the next Summer School. The fellowship between lay and clergy, teachers, typists, writers, shop assistants, musicians, housewives has been a thing of joy.

If ever music has been mere "padding" or adornment to your play, after York that is over; for Christopher le Fleming has been in our midst. For me his key-note was *explore* and to encourage us he was generous to share the rich treasure of his own explorations. Mr. le Fleming pleaded for the true marriage of music and drama and then illustrated it unforgettably the last night in *Pull Devil—Pull Baker*

* Sister Isabel Squires is a deaconess of the Methodist Church and herself has published several religious plays.

when his own music was wedded to the movingly dramatic theme of Mrs. Baxter and consummated by the living flow of movement that Miss Woodcock so amazingly evokes from an inexperienced cast. Music for pure music's sake was given us on Sunday afternoon when Miss Jelli D'Aranyi and Mr. le Fleming played in the chapel. The confident strength of Brahms, the lyric ecstasy of Vaughan Williams we may forget; but not the miracle of holy serenity into which Bach led us out of much pain and passion. That was of God. Surely we go back to drama keener to listen for, keener to collect the music we owe our plays and our people—because of York.

It is a small step from here to the literary and religious depths to which Rev. W. M. Merchant took us. That we should feel after the *muscularity* of words caught my mind. Here was nothing flabby in word or outlook; morality strongly put in its important but derivative place; worship at the heart centrally. He outstripped most of us, but provoked many to think, to enquire and to heckle. What more could a lecturer ask? For some of us he dusted and brought out new and shining, such long buried drama as Webster's *White Devil*, Ben Jonson's *Cataline* ("a profoundly Christian play"), *Tamberlane*, etc., and made provocative claims for Jacobean literature—enough to send us, slightly exasperated to re-read the contemporaries of Shakespeare but even more the master dramatist himself. My Shakespeare is unthumbed at *Measure for Measure*, but I cannot forbear now to test it out as a "theological" play. Thence to the twentieth century. Straight from his production of T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* at the Edinburgh Festival of Music and Drama, came Martin Browne to read us extracts from the play. Amongst us as we listened there was rapt attention, uneasy laughter; doubts and devoteeism. The whole play must be read to judge but the "resolution" seemed from these extracts to fail the human need so brilliantly diagnosed.

Here began and later became articulate an uneasy stir. Is R.D.S. becoming too highbrow—too Third Programme? Near me one was remembering his dockers at home, another had gone in thought to her class of fourteen year olds, one expecting a baby, two others in serious moral danger; a club leader behind me visualized his loveable but unliterary club members he specially came to York to help. The unprivileged, the unheeding. What has Bach, T. S. Eliot, Charles Williams, Ben Jonson, Euripides to do with them? It was out. The Open Forum gave the public chance; and the plea was made for the "3rd Form" in life's school. The plea was answered directly by word of mouth; but it was more satisfyingly answered by the staff in their class and rehearsal work with us. As we worked together uneasiness found comfort. Brains began to tick over. "That was fun; that was worthwhile." "I could take that with my lads, or my class or my club." No acting group I have ever known could resist the Moses-Pharaoh contest we mimed with Miss Woodcock out of *Green Pastures*; no juniors should be robbed of the charming and spiritual Christmas Legend, *The Animal's Gifts*, we learned to act with Miss Freda Collins; Miss Keily's spirited chorus work had been tested out amongst

youngsters in an industrial area so she knew our problem without dismay or defeat; R. H. Ward helped us to *be* a crowd imaginatively in a way any class or club group could be; Lawrence Hayes was the first who has ever made my untechnical mind kindle to amps and volts and watts. Practical help with interleaved prompt copies, the disciplined cast, the analysis of play, etc., came from Mrs. Ratcliff who so obviously knows from the inside the average amateur dramatic group. We shall not quickly forget her caustic comment about actors whose left hands look paralysed in a performance because up to the dress rehearsal they have always held a script in them.

To this valuable practical help was added understanding at a deeper level and a new challenge in such talks as "Where's the Audience?" The tension between our hunger for quality and our grasp on where our audience is is the only kind of suffering which can bring to birth new dramatic works which shall be live, "muscular", popular in the best sense of the word. One of the high lights of the week to me was the readings from Ghéon's *Way of the Cross*, illustrating Mrs. Helen Lamb's talk. The quality was unmistakable; but I knew it accessible. I knew it could pierce the untutored and the learned for it had a simplicity and directness which is of God. It would take its part with perfect seemliness and quickening force alongside the reading of the Scriptures in a Church service; it would be equally telling in a Club-room epilogue. It seemed to me that *The Stable Manger* (Jessie Powell) and *Pull Devil—Pull Baker* were fruits of such a tension. Here is no lowering of standard but a meeting of people where they are in order to lead them deeper and further. Potential as well as accepted dramatists left York stripped of any pride or complacency, yet with a great sense of urgency and pressure on their spirits.

It begins to emerge that no crumb of the feast prepared at York failed to meet someone's hunger. Yet how delightfully different we all are. What to me was a superb revelation of production seemed to my neighbour "nothing but a lot of jiggery-pokery"; of the same lecture one said it was crystal clear; the other it might have been Dutch. One remarked that he hadn't come to a drama school to sing; another that she was parched for lack of music and singing. I smiled to catch the implication in a comment on Richard Ward's fascinating description of the travelling theatre: "This is something like—something practical and efficient." Poor R.D.S.! Valiant R.D.S.! None of us went empty away.

Grave and gay so delightfully mingled through the whole school in lecture and class, found their way into the Students' concert. The Irish face and voice of the old mother in Synge's "Riders to the Sea" emptied us of vanity and took us with herself to the pure "rest" of despair. We have not lost this because we turned to laughter. Life is both; religion is both. We remember with gratitude the staff; we remember with chortles the caricature of the staff. In particular, how did the caricaturists come to miss Carina Robins, the school organizer, who so charmingly eased the tension and so oiled the wheels

of organization that we heard no creaking? Perhaps they could not find her equal. Fun gilded the whole week. The scholarly piece of work on York Miracles and Mysteries which Miss Elizabeth Brunskill gave us the first night was alight with humour.

But, fun in its place, our purpose was serious. This was a *religious* drama school. Our vocation is God-given—to win home through drama those for whom Christ lived, died, and rose again. The days began, continued, and ended with prayer. The insistence on sound theology was constant. And there was a strange unity in the plays produced on the last night. The shining difference between faith and doubt, good and evil was crystal clear—equally clear was the difference between religion and false piety. Again there was no room for complacency for Church goer or non-Church goer; for in the central place of most of them was the *cost* of salvation—the Incarnation and the Cross. Was not that at the heart of Prof. Gilbert Murray's talk where he stressed the tragedy of human life because of the finality of judgement and because it might have been so different; and where he moved on to say that tragedy is at the heart of God and our tragic situation is only "resolved" by God's being in it. Again Mr. Lamb in one clear and brilliant survey of human history as seen in the Bible drama and up to the present day, the true destiny of God's chosen servant in this fallen world is to give his life in sacrifice. With something like trembling we saw our own vocation as Christians in the cosmic purpose of God: and knew we had failed.

Ending in the Chapel where in the day time the strange Byzantine figure of Christ compelled our gaze and upward response, we had that Sunday evening the strange experience of a dramatic storm crashing out suddenly from an innocent-looking sky. The unexpected vividness and violence was symbolic of the terrible, glorious thing which is life. Words read that morning by Rev. Kenneth Wadsworth from the epistle came clearly again, "But our sufficiency is of God."

As one who has experienced an R.D.S. school for the first time may I acknowledge my debt to the organizers and to the most friendly willing staff of St. John's College, who fed and housed us so well. Also may I commend to others an unforgettable experience which will make life much more strenuous, but much more significant.

NEWS OF THE OTHERS

STAR TURNS

Chichester. *The Drama Festival.*

On February 25th part of the second annual Drama Festival organized by the Sussex Churches Drama Committee was held. Chichester is one of the centres in the long county of Sussex, now two counties as far as administration is concerned, but still one diocese. The Girl Guides' Hall where the Festival was held is a shabby little

hall in a quiet street; and such is the scarcity of halls, with or without a stage, in Chichester that this one is used all day long and every evening too; and judging by the dust, no time is left in which cleaning operations can take place. The girl guides were indeed still holding a meeting when the first spectators began to arrive for the festival, and the organizers had to work at very high pressure to get three sets of scenery and props into position in time. No little difficulties of this kind daunted them however, and even a curtain which stuck half-way did not really detract from the enthusiasm of both the audience and the teams competing. I insist on calling them teams, and the Festival is in essence a competition although non-competitive by repute. We are running in a race to put on "good theatre" and "good religious drama" although no one receives a prize. The marks are some criterion, especially to those of us who can compare them with marks in other highly competitive Festivals elsewhere.

There was, I think, a good atmosphere in our small and rather homely little theatre that night. Three teams, from Felpham, Aldingbourne, and Selsey took part; and at least one more society would have been represented but were prevented from coming by uncontrollable circumstances.

The curtain, after a slight struggle, opened upon *First Corinthians*, by H. F. Rubinstein, presented by the Felpham Church group.

I liked the play, in spite of the fact that I longed to re-group the characters and speed up the dialogue, and I felt that it illustrated very clearly the fact that sincerity is not enough in playing religious drama. I believe that many of the players were acting with great sincerity, but yet the story did not come alive. The very large cast had great difficulty in disposing themselves on such a cramped stage, and rehearsals must have presented the usual difficulty of finding times when everyone could get together.

Mr. Hamilton, the Vicar of St. Elisabeth's, Eastbourne, introduced the Adjudicator, Douglas Remington, and warned those who had not listened to him before that he would be a charming but stern critic.

Mr. Remington was rather hard on this group, I thought, yet justly no doubt. He took up many points of production and suggested some parts were overdone. He thought the choice of play was not a good one. As a parochial effort it seemed to me there was a certain suitability in it, though it was perhaps a rather ambitious choice. I hope that the criticisms will spur them on to further efforts and will not discourage their hopes.

Aldingbourne W.I. and friends next presented a *Fourteenth Century Nativity*. No two plays could have formed a greater contrast, and the manner of their presentation was very different also. This team, already placed first in a W.I. competition for their presentation of the same play, had of course had more experience than the Felpham group, and had also no doubt profited by points gained in the previous adjudication for this earlier event. The play is a charming one in the language and phrasing of *Everyman*, and it was played in a simple and direct manner well suited to its period. One could easily imagine it

being played on a "pageant" or a cart in the streets of a medieval town, or in a church. . . .

It was obvious that the Adjudicator had a penchant for this play, though he severely criticized Herod for shouting, and the producer for introducing theatrical effects into such a period piece.

Finally, a Selsey group produced *The Centurion*, by Freda Collins. The action of this rather interesting play takes place in an ante-room of the judgement hall, while the trial of Jesus and the Crucifixion are taking place. The play makes great demands upon the players, and also upon the audience. Much depends upon good timing of crowd noises off-stage.

The play certainly held the audience, and was given a good hand at its close. The setting was simple but strangely effective, the curtains of the grey curtain-set being parted and two of them hanging in close folds to represent fluted columns against a skycloth and a balustrade.

The Adjudicator paid this group the compliment of criticizing them on a higher level than the others, or so it seemed to me. His chief criticism was that the Centurion used a good voice rather unwisely.

When summing up and reading out the marks, Mr. Remington said he had placed Aldingbourne first with actual marking, and a Certificate of Merit would be awarded to them, and also to Selsey, who were only a few marks behind. He stressed the fact that this Festival was designed to further the cause of good religious drama, and that no prizes were to be awarded.

Mr. Hamilton, before closing the proceedings, said that this group of plays in Chichester was part of a Festival which this year was being played in three different centres in Sussex. Next year the Festival would be held in May, and again it would be decentralized. He hoped that each year more teams would take part.

MARY WILKINSON.

Sheffield. *The Gates of Hell.*

We quote first the beginning of a very long letter from the Vicar of a Sheffield parish in his Parish Magazine "Friends"—sufficient to show that the Vicar himself was not unmoved by the play; second, excerpts from two letters, one from a member of the audience, one from a member of the cast; and third, a review in the Sheffield Diocesan Gazette from the pen of H. G. G. Herklots. Clearly, the cat is among the pigeons. We listen eagerly for the first minatory miaowings and flutter of wings upon Thames-side. Will London think to-morrow what Sheffield thought yesterday?

The Vicar writes: —

"A few weeks ago many of us went to see a play called *Gates of Hell*. It was presented by the Christian Community Players whose standard of performance is high. Miss Pamela Keily produced it and she has a native incapacity for doing less than excellently. A well-known member of the Church in this parish played one of the leading parts with distinction. Large and appreciative audiences gathered for every performance. Not all these advantages could hide the fact that

Gates of Hell is a feeble play unworthy of the time and trouble given to it. It succeeded only in one thing—it raised a furious discussion about one of the most perplexing problems in human life and in the Christian Church.

“In the second scene of the first Act of *Gates of Hell* we saw a meeting of Church people in the drawing-room of the Vicarage. A nice lot of people they were too—close fisted, hard hearted, trivial, narrow minded, spiteful, censorious, facetious, quarrelsome, and vain. To give the impression—as the play unhappily did—that such people are typical of the Church in this country is as unfair as Celsus’ description of the New Testament Church as a ‘rascally gang of swindlers and hysterical women’. Nevertheless, we cannot, and therefore we may not, deny that selfish, hypocritical, unsatisfactory people are to be found not only in the Church, but even in its inner councils. In the Creed we say that we believe that the Church is holy. How comes it then that such people are found within it? How can we explain the existence of profane, unclean persons in a holy Church, or the presence of malice, hatred and uncharitableness in a Fellowship founded upon Love?”

R. L. H. writes:—

“... The theme of this play is the Church, the risk of the Church—from the Divine risk of its start (some Angels in the Prologue have discreet doubts) to the risk Paul took in expanding it tenuously into Europe; and so to the Young Church Overseas in the Twentieth Century—the risk of consolidation now instead of expansion. And then the challenge: at home the Church seems terribly to have missed its high vocation; will the audience, with young Sue as their representative, take up the challenge, feel out again to embrace the risk?”

“The play created controversy in Sheffield, arousing great enthusiasm and a little rather intense opposition. The controversy was not surprising.

“... No criticism amounts to much against the praise which must be given for the assembling of such a production as this, and for maintaining the extreme enthusiasm of the actors. The best comment on the work of both writer and producer was the comment of the entire audience after the final curtain—silence; profound silence, consisting of solemnity, elation, and thought which is provoked by the stirring of conscience.”

M. M. writes:—

“I have lately had the great good fortune to take part in the recent first production of Miss Joyce Biddell’s play, the *Gates of Hell*. It was such a tremendous experience that I feel I must express something of what it has meant to me.

“Those who have read the play already, will know that its scenes include a sincere portrayal of the Early Church; a caricature of the Church to-day; a presentation of the modern situation in the mission field; and a devastating picture of the reaction of the modern Church when asked to help relieve that situation—all linked together by the

presence of Angels from High Heaven, and Satan in the guise of a church caretaker.

"When I first heard about it I understood that it was some sort of pageant, depicting past, present, and future—I suppose it *is* a pageant, in a roundabout way; but the glorious solemn grandeur conjured up by that word cannot possibly describe *Gates of Hell*. Rather the opposite! It's a slap in the face, a poke in the ribs, and a knife-thrust, all at once. . . .

"Add to that the influence of a producer who can get the most out of animal, vegetable *and* mineral—and Church circles in Sheffield sit up and take *very* much notice!

"Observers have apparently been shaken to the core, in one way or another—thinkers who take things seriously have been shocked, think it is *too* blunt, and wonder if it will do harm; but humbler folk have loved it, gloated over it, and said: 'That's *us*. It makes us *think*. . . .'

"The Christian Community Players have found that difference in audiences with most of their plays—usually a contrast between East- and West-end localities; but this, of course, is on a far greater scale!

"I personally, as a member of the cast, have loved every minute of it. . . .

"For all that, it offers mountainous difficulties to any producer—even to Miss Keily in a city where she has worked with—and can call upon—the necessary fifty people; and where rehearsal space is practically nil. . . ."

H. G. G. H. writes:—

"Few events have caused such spirited controversy in the diocese as the production in the Library Theatre, Sheffield, of Miss Joyce Biddell's play, *The Gates of Hell*, written for the 150th anniversary of the C.M.S. The production was by Miss Pamela Keily, who showed her customary skill in achieving results with few properties and amateur players. And everyone admitted that there were some parts of the play that they liked. Nevertheless, opinion was sharply divided for and against it.

"The play's defenders—and there were many—found it a challenging criticism of the trivialities of modern parochial life. Some came again and again because in the parochial scenes they found themselves portrayed. And if there seemed to be no development in the characters of the members of the parochial meeting—well, that is what we are up against. Many Church people—for whom the play was surely intended—came away saying, 'Well, it's up to us. The next act is being written; and we must play a better part in the writing of it.'

"The play's critics had many things to say. It seemed, they felt, that the members of the English parish portrayed were not only unconverted but unconvertible. A parish seen from High Heaven would hardly be viewed in so merciless a light. Whereas the scene of Luke and

Paul at Troas was extremely well written, that in Southern Sudan was jejune in comparison. After all the missionary work of the Church in that part of the world is done in a background of polygamy; the reporting of which is not likely to produce in an actual mission station the mawkish sentimentality displayed on the boards of the Library Theatre. The degraded caretaker who represented the Devil was far removed from that principle of evil with which Christians are engaged in such deathly combat, and who appears more often in an attractive guise than in a degraded one. Yet in the end the Devil seemed to have won; and the fundamental pharisaism of the Vicar's wife seemed almost to be approved.

"These paragraphs hardly begin to illustrate the debate which has been taking place. The B.B.C. has a programme entitled *To Start Your Talking*. Miss Biddell's play has certainly done that: it has won the respect of widespread discussion. We shall be interested to learn what the critics make of it when it is produced in London. And we shall watch with interest to learn what her next play will be like."

ALL THE REST

Denbigh. The Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society produced *Murder in the Cathedral*, about which the *Free Press* of 18th June wrote as follows:—

"A very interesting performance of *Murder in the Cathedral* (T. S. Eliot), was given at Howell's School, by the School in conjunction with the Denbigh Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society, on Tuesday and Wednesday evening. A startling innovation and a significant development in the modern theatre when it was first published in 1935, *Murder in the Cathedral* was certainly an innovation at Denbigh, and quite apart from the qualities of the production itself, the opportunity given to see this play was welcome, while those who had the courage to present it are to be thanked and commended. The play is not only a great emotional experience for those who see it, it is the most important if not the only development of any importance in the drama of our generation, and it sets the trend along which all new growth in the English and Welsh theatres has developed.

"The play is for appreciation, not for entertainment. It requires active participation on the part of the audience, which, far from sitting back and enjoying itself, has to bring its intelligence to bear, and, what is more, the audience is drawn into and becomes part of the play."

Liverpool. The Bishop's Players report briefly as below:—

The first tour of this Company of Players of John Drinkwater's *A Man's House* has been an encouraging success.

In June, 1945, the Bishop of Liverpool appointed a small Committee to give advice and help to the diocese on Religious Drama. Drama Schools, and a Festival of Religious Drama have been held, and from the first the idea of a touring company of players was in the minds of the Committee.

It was felt that the best way of raising the standard of the production of Religious Drama in the parishes was for people to see a good production.

The Company was formed in this way: incumbents were asked to send to the Bishop's Advisory Committee the names of likely players. An experienced producer agreed to undertake the production of *A Man's House*. This play was chosen because it seemed to the Committee to be good drama with an inspiring Christian Message, and its language plain and intelligible to an average audience.

Those whose names had been sent to the Committee were invited to come to a reading of this play with the producer. This did not produce the full cast; but those who attended the first reading brought in others known to them who were interested in acting. So a full cast was brought together, and rehearsals proceeded; these were held in two Church Halls and in a central room in Liverpool.

Stage-Manager and "master of lights" were appointed, and these contributed in rich measure to the fine production of the play.

Parishes were invited to welcome the Company, and eventually a tour of seven centres was arranged. All along the company has been thought of as "Diocesan Players". And then the happy idea of calling them "The Bishop's Players" was conceived, and this met with the Bishop's approval. In most cases, the Company played to full houses, and everywhere the impression was of a play beautifully produced and the old story of our Lord's Passion and Resurrection brought to life in a new way.

The formation of such a Company of Players was not brought about without difficulties, but these were overcome: and the success of the first tour is a measure of the untiring and devoted work of a small team whose aim has been to knit together the technique of Dramatic Art with religious purpose.

Coventry. Canon J. H. Proctor writes:—

"I send you a short account of the production of our pageant *The Prayer Book and the People* which took place in the ruins of Coventry Cathedral on the evening of June 15th as part of the diocesan celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Book of Common Prayer.

"I am glad to say that the production went through without a hitch, and that 1,500 people came on that sunlit evening to take part in the proceedings. Before any of the actors were seen there was a short introduction in sound only which came from one of the Crypts and was amplified into the ruins. This showed the dying away of the old Latin services and, by trumpet and proclamation, heralded the new book of 1549. The voices of two objectors were heard—the Roman Catholic in a rich West Country dialect, and the Puritan in a solemn tone. The Enquirer and the Narrator took the story on to the point at which the Book became more or less stabilized in 1662.

"The actors were drawn from every Deanery in the Diocese—no easy matter in a scattered Diocese such as this—and the Congregation were provided with printed programmes which gave an outline of each scene and the words of the hymns in which they were to join.

"After three-quarters of an hour of pageantry the Bishop of Lichfield preached an appropriate sermon, reminding his listeners that in 1549 Coventry and Lichfield were one diocese. The sermon over, all joined in the hymn, 'O Faith of England', and the robed choirs led the great concourse into the neighbouring Church of the Holy Trinity where Festal Evensong was sung. So packed was the church that people were standing eight deep at the back. Soon after nine o'clock this memorable celebration came to an end, and the busloads of visitors went off to town and village southwards to Shakespeare's country and northwards to George Eliot's.

"Judging by the reports in the local press and by the spate of appreciative letters this was well worth doing."

Tavistock. The Deanery Players well known to R.D.S. members, featured in a News Talk over the air on March 21st, in the series "It Begins at Home", by Martin Willson.

"A few weeks ago we had news in this Programme of an interesting and clearly an important venture in Religious Drama which is being made on a Bristol Housing Estate.

"This evening I want to tell you of the activities of a Company of Players in a country district who have made something of a name for themselves in the last three years. The Deanery Players of the Tavistock Rural Deanery north of Plymouth are all amateurs. But since 1946 they've put on a full-length three-act play each winter and taken it out on tour. Their specially designed scenery and props and lighting equipment make the performances readily adaptable to the smallest village hall or the spacious and well-appointed town halls. In their three years they've travelled well over 2,000 miles, played to over 10,000 people—and handed over between £600 and £700 to the Devon Churches Thanksgiving Fund in the first two years. These are impressive figures and in themselves speak of a remarkable achievement. There must be an enthusiasm and devotion of a high order among the players to maintain such a record. But the achievement of the Deanery Players goes a good deal deeper than that. It would be quite possible for all that energy and devotion to be misdirected and indeed, wasted unless a high standard was maintained in the choice of the plays presented. Here the Deanery Players have a great advantage, for the three plays which they have presented (in these three winter seasons) have been written by a member of the Company who is a first-rate craftsman as a playwright. I can give you no names for it has always been the express wish of the Company that there should be no publicity for the authoress or the producer or for any of the players, but this I can say—the plays are the work of a skilled dramatist with a firm grasp on the Christian Faith—playwright, producer, stage manager, and players work as a team to bring a vivid experience of Christian Truth to the people of their neighbourhood. Incidentally, the audience always has an opportunity after the final curtain to have a general discussion in the body of the hall on the subject of the play.

"I've said enough to indicate that the Deanery Players have been covering really important ground—that the great opportunities (of teaching through religious drama) which these 100 performances have given have not been wasted. They are, through this dramatic work, doing solid work for the Kingdom of God. And it is encouraging to know of such work being done."

Leigh-on-Sea. On Sunday, 17th July, the Christian Drama League of Union Congregational Church, presented *The Fare to Tarshish*, by Jessie Powell.

The play was performed at 8.15 p.m., allowing time for people from other churches in the Borough of Southend to attend. It was most encouraging to have representatives from the Anglican, Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches present.

Union Congregational Church is fortunate in its architecture, having a wide low rostrum with side pulpit. To set the scene for *The Fare to Tarshish*, a realistic Harbour might have been built—but it would have been wrong. The church presented its normal appearance for the usual 6.30 p.m. service. Between the end of that service and the commencement of the play, an organ recital was given during which the Communion Table was moved from the rostrum to floor level, still remaining in its same relative position, and a life-belt was hung on the organ screen which is central in the church. The only other property was a platform consisting of three shallow steps. With the exception of Jonah, his Pilot and Agent, the other characters were in modern dress, save that The Manager and his Agent wore black cloaks lined with red.

The Harbour-master was in navy-blue uniform with large gold crosses sewn on the lapels. His male pilots wore white shirts with dark trousers. Each of them having a sash at the end of which had been sewn a cross made of silver sequins.

On reading, the play seems to have comparatively little movement. The production by the Union Congregational Church showed that it is by no means as static as it appears.

The production was greatly appreciated and highly commended. It is firmly believed that it has done a great service to the cause of religious drama in Southend. A repeat production is being contemplated in the early autumn at another church.

J. S. W.

Wealdstone. *They Went Out Singing*, by Frederick Wiseman performed by the Church Lads' Brigade. A production well worth seeing. This play tells of the early rise of the Church and the exciting but dangerous work of the first Disciples. These were ordinary men, but with a difference. They were convinced that the Christ had come and were intent on spreading the Great News, and, if necessary, to suffer persecution and martyrdom for His sake. It is a fine play and was ably performed. The Company acted throughout with a fine buoyancy of spirit which they conveyed to the audience. It was convincing and natural; the producer is to be commended. His reward, I am sure, is to know that the caste have caught and felt some of the conviction and ardour and bravery of the first Disciples. Let us hope that this effort will be the first of many and that these young players will go on from strength to strength.

The technical side of the production perhaps needed more attention which we hope will be given to the next effort. There is a real place for drama of this kind in making alive the experience of the Church.

L. C.

Windermere. A three-day Religious Drama School—the first of its kind in Westmorland—was held at Windermere from June 9th to 11th. The organizer was Mrs. I'B. Smith, to whose enthusiasm the inception of the School was due. The Rev. H. I'B. Smith acted as Chaplain. Diocesan support was given by the Bishop of Carlisle, the Bishop of Penrith (Chairman of the School), and Canon Davenport (Chairman of the Carlisle Diocesan Adult Religious Education Council).

The School, which centred round St. John's Church and Parish Hall, was well-attended and enthusiastic. Miss A. V. J. Stuart of Edinburgh talked on Choric Speech in recent Verse Drama, with the support of an excellent demonstration group in Choric Speech from St. Ann's School, Windermere; Miss Margaret Cropper dealt with Nativity Plays and their Production; Mr. F. Wilson demonstrated the principles of Make-up; Miss Anne Moreton from Riseley showed the important part played by Mime and Movement in Dramatic Production; and Mr. Griffiths dealt with the musical background of the Religious Play. A discussion on Religious Drama from the point of view of the Clergy was opened by the Rev. R. Lindsay of Lanercost Priory, and the Rev. H. I'B. Smith.

On the last evening, demonstration rehearsals of two plays were given, *Martha and Mary*, by S. and M. Box, in the Parish Hall, and *According to the Scriptures*, by E. Heward, in St. John's Church. Miss Evelyn Hart of the Salisbury Religious Drama Fellowship conducted the School.

Certainly a very crowded three days—but so full of interest and co-operation that the signs are set fair for future development.

E. H.

Penarth. *Militant and Triumphant*, a pageant of Christianity down the ages and its application to modern times, was staged at Trinity Hall, on Friday, 16th March, 1949, by the Penarth and Barry Circuits of the Methodist Church. Written by John and Sheila Gibbs, and produced by the former, six performances in all have been given in the Barry and Dinas Powis area, and throughout have attracted large audiences.

After a prologue, the scene switched to a typical episode of the present day, which demonstrated the way in which religion becomes "squeezed out" by every-day occupations.

R.D.S. NEWS AND NOTICES

THE COUNCIL

The Annual Meeting of Council with Miss Seyler in the Chair met on Wednesday 28th September in London.

The Rev. A. L. Macarthur of the Presbyterian Church of England was co-opted to the Council.

Miss Seyler, Mr. Leonard Crainford and Mr. John H. L. Trustram were re-elected by acclamation to their offices of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Hon. Treasurer respectively.

The **Executive Committee** for 1949-50 consists of the following :—

Rev. W. M. Merchant (*elected*); Mr. E. Martin Browne (*Chairman*), Mrs. K. M. Baxter, Mr. Oliver Bell, Mrs. Martin Browne, Miss Diana Carroll, Miss Freda Collins, Mr. Leonard Crainford, Rev. Robert Duce, Lt.-Col. R. C. Grant, Miss Pamela Keily, Mrs. Philip Lamb, Mr. Herbert Malden, Rev. John L. Mortimer, Rev. Rex Parkinson, Rev. Hugh Ross Williamson, Mr. Clive Sansom, Miss Ruth Spalding, Rev. Cyril Thomas (*re-elected*).

A Balance Sheet dated 30th June, 1949, and an Income and Expenditure Account for the fifteen months ended on that date were presented by the Hon. Treasurer and adopted by the Council. A copy of these accounts may be obtained by any member on application to the Secretary.

After Business, the Meeting listened to Rev. F. N. Davey answering questions put to him by the Editor of *Christian Drama*. (See leading article.)

REGIONAL CONFERENCE

On the same day as the Council fifteen R.D.S. representatives from various regions of the British Isles met under the chairmanship of Carina Robins Travelling Adviser to compare experience and discuss problems. The results were both interesting and encouraging and showed the great variety of both opportunities and difficulties to be dealt with.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

We announce the immediate publication of two plays in the R.D.S. series : *The Wise and the Foolish Virgins*—the parable made into a play by R. H. Ward ; and *The Three Wise Men* a play for Christmas and Epiphany by H. D. C. Pepler. Both are priced at 1/6.

Henzie Raeburn's Nativity play *Beginning of the Way* has been reprinted and copies are again available—price 1/6 ; with music 2/-.

An important addition to the pamphlet series is in preparation : *The Use of Music in Religious Drama* by Christopher le Fleming. It will cover such questions as "What music shall we choose?" and "Whom shall we get to play it?"

SUMMER SCHOOL OF RELIGIOUS DRAMA, 1950.

Miss Robins is again organizing a nine days' residential School to take place during the summer holidays somewhere in the south of England. The Ministry of Education is unable to co-operate with us next year as they did for the York School. Those interested are advised to write to the R.D.S. office : they will then be notified as soon as details are available.

LIBRARY.

New Plays added to the Library.

The Baby in the Bulrushes, from Five Short Plays, Mainly for Women. KATHLEEN CONYNGHAM GREENE, George Harrap & Co. Ltd. 4/-. 10 w. Scene I. The Bank of

the River Nile. Scene 2. A Passage in the Palace. The action is placed in Egypt, within a few days of the birth of Moses.

**The Blind Witness*. FREDA COLLINS, Edinburgh House Press, 9d. 1949. 1 m., 6 w., 1 scene, 30 minutes. A blind Chinese girl bears witness to the truths learnt in the Christian school.

**Christ is Born*. IRENE GASS, Mowbray & Co. Ltd., 1/-, 1939. 12 m., or b., 1 g., dancing angels, animals. Four scenes 20 minutes. For production in a hall, an outer and inner stage, steps and no curtain.

**The Christmas Story*. FREDA COLLINS, Mowbray 1/6, 1949. Nine scenes, but can be produced with four scenes only. Large or small cast. For production in church. Originally presented by over a hundred children in St. Andrew's Church, Willesden. The notes on the original production are not intended to be slavishly copied, but show the way in which the script came to life.

The Household of God. EVELYN GILL, Edinburgh House Press, 9d., 1949. 10 g., 35 mins. A play on the Colour Question set in an English School.

The Just Impediment. a Modern Love Story in Three Acts. LESBIA SCOTT, Mothers' Union, 1949, 3s. 5 m., 7 w. The situation of a girl brought up in the Anglican Faith, who falls in love with a man, only to discover that he is the innocent partner in a divorce case. (Fee : £2 2s. ; £1 10s.).

Magdalene. FRANK C. RAYNOR, Budd & Gillat, 1/6, 1949. 3 w., 25 mins. Mary's return to her home after her first meeting with Christ.

**Mary of Magdala*. ERNEST MILTON, R.D.S./S.P.C.K., 4/-, 1949. 13 m., 7 w. Full length. An imaginative reconstruction of the circumstances of the Magdalene's way of living and her revolutionary following of our Lord. The key-note is that Christ came to save sinners. (Amateur fees £3 3s., £2 2s.) Advanced.

**Seven Plays for Children*. R.D.S./S.P.C.K., 3/6, 1949.

That Night. AGNES SENIOR. 9 m., 3 w. Prologue, travellers. One act. 15-20 mins. Nativity Play in verse in which the Innkeeper and his family reconstruct the happenings of that night with awed simplicity.

The First Santa Claus. C. WINSLAND. 4 m., 5 w., 3 children, angels, carol singers. Prologue and Epilogue : Home of a little boy. 3 acts : the story of St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, A.D. 310. 30-40 mins.

Flower Fantasy. ROBERT DUCE. An Easter Play, 2 m. voices, 6 flowers, 5 or 6 butterflies, bumble-bees, etc. Scene : A Garden. 15 mins.

The Hillside Crib. FREDA COLLINS. 8 m., 4 w., 2 children, Angel, optional. Non-speaking:—the Holy Family, friars, townsfolk. 2 scenes. 40 mins. Scene 2 may be acted alone with 8 or 9 characters, A Christmas Play about St. Francis.

A Play of All Good Things. LESBIA SCOTT. To be performed in church by two adults and an indefinite number of children. Two scenes. "Thou whose praise creation sings, God of big and little things."

The Anatomy of Mischief. "Roma." 1 m., 1 w., 5 b., 1 g. Scene : Class-room in a senior school. 20-25 mins. A morality for Juniors in which the nature of sin is amusingly demonstrated.

Christ's Thorns. WILFRED MORRIS. 7 m., 2 w., 5 children. Scene I. Clearing in the forest. Scene 2. Room of an Inn. A Christmas story in which a party of children are led to Bethlehem by the Spirit of Music. Hall.

(Fee on each of the plays : 5/-, 3/6.)

The Vigil. LADISLAS FEDOR, S. French, N.Y., 1947, 1949. 18 m., 6 w. Full length. The foiling of an attempt to disprove the Resurrection in the trial (American Court) of Joseph of Arimathea's Gardener, charged with stealing the Body.

**Cyprian*. FREDA COLLINS. 19 m., 7 w. 3 acts, 9 scenes. R.D.S./S.P.C.K., 2s. 6d. Now published. See note in *Christian Drama*, No. VIII.

While Rome Burns. FRANK C. RAYNOR, Budd & Gillat, 1/6, 1949. 7 m., 6 w., 1 b., girls and crowd. Two scenes. 25 mins. A.D. 64. Scene 1: Nero's Palace. Scene 2: A Christian cobbler's shop in the Esquiline. (Fee 10/6.)

**The Wise and Foolish Virgins.* R. H. WARD, R.D.S., 1/6, 1949. Two angels, 5 seekers (2 m., 3 w.), 5 wise and 5 foolish virgins. 25 mins. Hall. The parable made into a play. (Fee: apply dramatist c/o R.D.S.)

The Trumpet Shall Sound. PHOEBE M. REES, Steel's Play Bureau, 1/6. 6 w., 1 hr. The play concerns a family in Damascus, which is involved in the scheme for St. Paul's escape from the city. (Fee £1 1s.).

* On the List of Recommended Plays.

We regret two inaccuracies in our last issue. "*Uncle Pao*" by Harold T. Cook, is published by the "Methodist Missionary Society" not the "Metropolitan Missionary Society", and the scene of Mary Bird's adventures was Persia, not Paris!

Reference Books

The Aims of Poetic Drama. Presidential Address to the Poet's Theatre Guild. T. S. Eliot. 6d., 1949. Published by the Poet's Theatre Guild.

Drama in Schools and Youth Centres. GEORGE H. HOLYROYD and NORA RATCLIFF, Macdonald & Co., 7/6. Revised Edition, 1949. Deals with every aspect of Drama and with Dramatic Methods in schools of every type. Photographs and diagrams.

Festival Drama. ISABEL CHISMAN, Methuen, 7/6, 1949. A Handbook for Amateur Production. Contains useful information and is full of valuable hints to producers.

How to Mime. CONSTANCE ROSS-MACKENZIE. Illustrated by Marjorie Fraser, H. F. W. Deane & Sons Ltd., 3/6, 1949. A practical guide for beginners.

Principles of Shakespearian Production. G. WILSON KNIGHT, first published 1936, first issued in Pelican Books, 1949. The chapter on "Shakespeare and Ritual" is of special interest.

Preaching and the Dramatic Arts. E. WINSTON JONES, Macmillan N.Y., 1948. A practical discussion on the bearing of the arts upon effectiveness in preaching.

Stage Make-up Made Easy. M. H. BENOLIEL. Illustrated by Arnold E. Jones. H. F. W. Deane & Sons, Ltd. 7/6.

Plays in Typescript

Benediktavern Christmas Play (from Bavaria). Thirteenth or fourteenth century. Translation of part by E. C. Blake.

Children of the Storm. K. M. BAXTER. A Voice, 3 m., 2 w., a few children. 30-35 mins. A simple play for village performance to be played without scenery or lighting effects on the steps of the chancel, and in the front row of pews, or in the choir.

The Divine Praises. A Christmas Masque. FREDA COLLINS. Four Archangels, 11 m., 3 w., 2 b. Other shepherds if required. For church or hall.

The Story of the Passion in Mime. Arranged by the Rev. R. H. HAWKINS with suggestions for production. This was presented in the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Nottingham last year by members of the congregations of five local churches. The Person of Christ was portrayed in the 11 Episodes which were given with simplicity and devotion.

CHRISTIAN DRAMA is the quarterly magazine of the RELIGIOUS DRAMA SOCIETY. President: The Lord Bishop of Chichester. Chairman of Executive: E. Martin Browne. Chairman of Council: Miss Athene Seyler. Travelling Adviser: Miss Carina Robins. Librarian: Miss K. Bainbridge-Bell. Secretary: T. G. Bartholomew. All enquiries and applications for membership should be addressed to The Secretary, R.D.S., S.P.G.K. House, Northumberland Avenue, W.C. 2.